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tered through a woman's nature, the strong current of life in him becomes genius in his daughter. Hard as his creed was, it seems to have softened insensibly to himself as he grew older, unable to resist the innate kindliness and healthiness of his nature. The book gives us the impression of a stalwart theological prize-fighter, ready to step into the ring at a moment's warning, and, after a good pounding given and taken, to shake hands and be friends. The race is not running out in New England while it can give birth to such sturdy Saxons as this.

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19. — *Roundabout Papers*. By W. M. THACKERAY, Author of "Vanity Fair," &c. With Illustrations. Reprinted from the "Cornhill Magazine." New York: Harper and Brothers. 1863. pp. 292.

THE shock which was felt in this country at the sudden death of Thackeray was a new proof, if any were wanting, that London is still our social and literary capital. Not even the loss of Irving called forth so universal and strong an expression of sorrow. And yet it had been the fashion to call Thackeray a cynic. We must take leave to doubt whether Diogenes himself, much less any of his disciples, would have been so tenderly regretted. We think there was something more in all this than mere sentiment at the startling extinction of a great genius. There was a universal feeling that we had lost something even rarer and better, — a true man.

Thackeray was not a cynic, for the simple reason that he was a humorist, and could not have been one if he would. Your true cynic is a sceptic also; he is distrustful by nature, his laugh is a bark of selfish suspicion, and he scorns man, not because he has fallen below himself, but because he can rise no higher. But humor of the truest quality always rests on a foundation of belief in something better than it sees, and its laugh is a sad one at the awkward contrast between man as he is and man as he might be, between the real snob and the ideal image of his Creator. Swift is our true English cynic, with his corrosive sarcasm; the satire of Thackeray is the recoil of an exquisite sensibility from the harsh touch of life. With all his seeming levity, Thackeray used to say, with the warmest sincerity, that Carlyle was his master and teacher. He had not merely a smiling contempt, but a deadly hatred, of all manner of *shams*, an equally intense love for every kind of manliness, and for gentlemanliness as its highest type. He had an eye for pretension as fatally detective as an acid for an alkali; wherever it fell, so clear and seemingly harmless, the weak spot was sure to betray itself. He called himself a disciple of Carlyle, but would have been the first

to laugh at the absurdity of making any comparison between the playful heat-lightnings of his own satire and that lurid light, as of the Divine wrath over the burning cities of the plain, that flares out on us from the profoundest humor of modern times. Beside that *ingenium perfectum* of the Scottish seer, he was but a Pall-Mall Jeremiah after all.

It is curious to see how often Nature, original and profuse as she is, repeats herself; how often, instead of sending one complete mind like Shakespeare, she sends two who are the complements of each other, — Fielding and Richardson, Goethe and Schiller, Balzac and George Sand, and now again Thackeray and Dickens. We are not fond of comparative criticism, we mean of that kind which brings forward the merit of one man as if it depreciated the different merit of another, nor of supercilious criticism, which measures every talent by some ideal standard of possible excellence, and, if it fall short, can find nothing to admire. A thing is either good in itself or good for nothing. Yet there is such a thing as a contrast of differences between two eminent intellects by which we may perhaps arrive at a clearer perception of what is characteristic in each. It is almost impossible, indeed, to avoid some sort of parallel *à la* Plutarch between Thackeray and Dickens. We do not intend to make out which is the greater, for they may be equally great, though utterly unlike, but merely to touch on a few striking points. Thackeray, in his more elaborate works, always paints character, and Dickens single peculiarities. Thackeray's personages are all men, those of Dickens personified oddities. The one is an artist, the other a caricaturist; the one pathetic, the other sentimental. Nothing is more instructive than the difference between the illustrations of their respective works. Thackeray's figures are such as we meet about the streets, while the artists who draw for Dickens invariably fall into the exceptionally grotesque. Thackeray's style is perfect, that of Dickens often painfully mannered. Nor is the contrast less remarkable in the quality of character which each selects. Thackeray looks at life from the club-house window, Dickens from the reporter's box in the police-court. Dickens is certainly one of the greatest comic writers that ever lived, and has perhaps created more types of oddity than any other. His faculty of observation is marvellous, his variety inexhaustible. Thackeray's round of character is very limited; he repeated himself continually, and, as we think, had pretty well emptied his stock of invention. But his characters are masterpieces, always governed by those average motives, and acted upon by those average sentiments, which all men have in common. They never act like heroes and heroines, but like men and women.

Thackeray's style is beyond praise, — so easy, so limpid, showing

everywhere by unobtrusive allusions how rich he was in modern culture, it has the highest charm of gentlemanly conversation. And it was natural to him,—his early works (“The Great Hoggarty Diamond,” for example) being as perfect, as low in tone, as the latest. He was in all respects the most finished example we have of what is called a man of the world. In the pardonable eulogies which were uttered in the fresh grief at his loss there was a tendency to set him too high. He was even ranked above Fielding,—a position which no one would have been so eager in disclaiming as himself. No, let us leave the old fames on their pedestals. Fielding is the greatest creative artist who has written in English since Shakespeare. Of a broader and deeper nature, of a larger brain than Thackeray, his theme is *Man*, as that of the latter is *Society*. The Englishman with whom Thackeray had most in common was Richard Steele, as these “Roundabout Papers” show plainly enough. He admired Fielding, but he loved Steele.

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20. — 1. *Chaucer's Legende of Goode Women*. Edited, with an Introduction and Notes, Glossarial and Critical, by HIRAM CORSON. Philadelphia: Frederick Leypoldt. 1864. 12mo. pp. xxxviii., 145.
2. *Observations on the Language of Chaucer*. By FRANCIS JAMES CHILD, Professor in Harvard College. From the Memoirs of the American Academy, New Series, Vol. VIII. Cambridge: Welch, Bigelow, and Company. 1862. 4to. pp. 107.

FOR two centuries after his death, Chaucer was honored not merely as the first in point of time of English poets, but the first in rank also. Thenceforward he became more and more a tradition, a name which poets invoked as they did the Muse, and with very much the same sincerity and right of acquaintance. Dryden, with his sterling English sense, and really admirable critical sagacity, had a feeling of his worth, and modernized a few of his poems, as a bookseller's job. Pope tried his hand at one or two more, with an unhappy lubricity choosing mostly such poems as had acquired a taint of uncleanness by the change of manners, though in Chaucer's day they but expressed the honest frankness of the time. Between 1687 and 1777 there was but one edition of Chaucer's works, and he was in the apogee of his fame when Tyrwhitt (1775–78) published his text of the *Canterbury Tales*. From that time forth, his credit has been on the rise, till he has at length assumed his true place, as second only to that English poet to whom all other poets are second.

Various attempts have been made to translate Chaucer, but they have all failed, and all deserved to fail, though Wordsworth, Leigh